TBWA manages 10 PBs of file data and accelerates collaboration with Nasuni®

TBWA is a unit of Omnicom Group, one of the world's largest media conglomerates.

With agencies in nearly every country, TBWA's creative renegades develop brand-building ideas for clients like Nissan, adidas, Henkel, Michelin, and Gatorade. Yet this creative drive and spirit extends to the company as a whole.

The global agency began exploring a cloud transformation more than a decade ago, while most enterprises were still anchoring their locations to legacy infrastructure. Under the leadership of TBWA/ Worldwide CIO Ted Colgate, the IT team began investigating digital transformation technologies that could consolidate infrastructure, reduce costs, and improve service to the business. More scalable alternatives to legacy file storage and data protection became a top priority. At TBWA, one of IT leadership's mandates is to find technology solutions that drive efficiency and profitability, and Nasuni fit squarely into that category.

Industry
Media & marketing

Cloud file storage
Nasuni

Add-on services
Nasuni Access Anywhere

Object storage
AWS & Cleversafe

Use cases
NAS consolidation; data protection; global file synchronization

Benefits
Cost savings; unified global infrastructure; accelerated global workflows; backup-free data protection; fast remote file access; simpler IT management

The Nasuni File Data Platform allowed TBWA to leverage the scalability and low cost of cloud object storage while also supporting TBWA's existing applications, scripts, and drive mappings, and presenting a familiar folder and directory structure to users. Since the initial deployment in 2012, Nasuni technology has evolved, and TBWA has expanded how the agency uses the platform.

Today, the Nasuni File Data Platform is an essential component of the media conglomerate's global infrastructure and creative workflows. TBWA now stores more than 10 PBs of file data in Nasuni appliances around the world. "Nasuni solved an enormous problem for us in that we got rid of massive on-prem storage systems, replaced them with virtual Nasuni appliances, and reduced the amount of local storage tremendously," says TBWA/Worldwide CIO Ted Colgate. "Nasuni provides a unified file space, unified data protection, collaboration across agencies and locations, governance, compliance, and more in a single platform."

To support the needs of its remote and hybrid workforce, TBWA also deployed Nasuni Access Anywhere, a service add-on to the Nasuni File Data Platform. "Now it doesn't matter where our people are located," adds Mark Litton, Managing Director, Global Data Center Strategy & Operations, TBWA. "Whether they're on a laptop or a phone, or even riding the tube in London, they can work from anywhere."

> We were storing many different versions of the **same files in lots of different places**," notes Litton. "An immeasurable amount of our storage consisted of files that were unnecessarily duplicated. The lost user productivity from finding and resolving version conflict issues was even worse.

> Given our multi-petabyte requirements, the scalability of **Nasuni's cloud-native file system was a major factor in our selection process**," says Litton. "Other solutions we looked at were controller-based, and thus constrained by hardware limits. We needed a solution that would scale while still giving every office high-speed access to files. Nasuni has worked as advertised.

Background: shrinking storage footprint

Collaboration is an essential part of project workflows at TBWA, and with 90,000 users spread across more than 300 offices in 98 countries, it's not easy, either. On a given project, multiple users in different locations create assets, cycle through internal revisions and approvals, then share and collaborate on these creative assets with clients. Prior to Nasuni, the business of storing, protecting, and sharing photos, videos, and other file data had become a problem.

Capacity

Due to unpredictable file data growth, agencies were buying massive SAN arrays upfront, then waiting a year or more to use all that expensive capacity.

Complexity

Various locations and agencies within TBWA were relying on different IT solutions to store, protect, and share file data. Managing this complex and varied infrastructure was a major headache for IT.

Costs

The expense and management difficulties of backup and storage were increasing. High-end IT administrators were forced to spend their entire time maintaining storage instead of doing more strategic business work. TBWA also had to rely on WAN acceleration to facilitate collaboration, which was further driving up expenses.

Collaboration

The difficulty of sharing Adobe Creative Cloud application files, high-resolution videos, Microsoft Office documents, and other files generated by TBWA's creative teams was slowing productivity.

TBWA & Nasuni

This all changed after TBWA moved to Nasuni. Today, TBWA's Adobe Creative Cloud application files, images and other unstructured data are stored via the Nasuni UniFS® global file system, which scales natively inside object storage. While Nasuni stores the master copies of all TBWA files in object storage, it also caches the actively used files and metadata on virtual Nasuni Edge Appliances located at each global office for fast access.

As TBWA's creative teams work on files from their Mac and Windows clients, Nasuni uses affordable, high-speed internet bandwidth to synchronize changes with the master copies in object storage, then propagate the changes across all edge appliances for true multi-site creative collaboration. Overall, Nasuni has enabled TBWA to consolidate file storage, accelerate creative collaboration, and strengthen data protection, benefiting TBWA's creatives and their clients, as well as IT and the business at large.

Local access, cloud scale

At each TBWA location, Nasuni Edge Appliances provide high-performance file access through CIFS/SMB or NFS file sharing protocols, and look and act like TBWA's former NAS devices and file servers, except they require, on average, 80% less hardware resources. Since files and metadata scale without limit in object storage, TBWA's unstructured data can never outgrow the capacity of a local device.

Reduced storage costs

With subscription software being centrally managed by IT, Nasuni enables TBWA to provision new storage for any of its locations with a few clicks. Capacity can be dialed up or down for any location, and Nasuni's virtual appliances can be deployed, decommissioned, and redeployed as needed.

Global file synchronization

TBWA needed a solution that could share its large design files – including images, and Adobe Photoshop, InDesign, and Illustrator files – across multiple sites without delay. With many Mac users, the agency also needed a solution that could support file sharing across macOS and Windows operating systems without performance delays or the loss of key Mac file system features.

Nasuni delivers fast file synchronization without the need for costly MPLS WAN bandwidth. Nasuni's advanced support for macOS SMB extensions, tags, long file and path names, extended metadata attributes, and other macOS features meets the usability needs of the agency's creative professionals.

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> Now that we have Nasuni, we've broken the cycle of buying capacity five years in advance, and not being able to fully utilize it," Litton notes. "**Storage costs are much easier to control** and storage provisioning across TBWA is much more efficient.

> Global file sharing with Nasuni is **simple, fast, and secure**," says Litton. "Files get copied into a folder in one site, and they appear in Mac Finder or Windows Explorer somewhere else in the world within minutes. The productivity gained back by our creatives, who no longer have to sit idle waiting on files, is immeasurable.

Nasuni Access Anywhere

TBWA was already shifting to a more flexible workplace prior to the pandemic, establishing WeWork-style offices and setting up creative users so that all the IT infrastructure they needed could fit in a laptop bag. The pandemic lockdowns only accelerated that transition. Initially, TBWA had its users relying on a VPN to give remote workers access to their Nasuni files.

Then IT decided to advance their technology package further by deploying the Nasuni Access Anywhere add-on service. "Nasuni Access Anywhere is making file access so much better for our remote users," notes Colgate. "Using Nasuni Access Anywhere is almost as quick as sitting next to the file server in your office. It's an absolutely fantastic technology that really makes a difference."

MS teams integration

One of the surprising benefits of Nasuni Access Anywhere has been the tight Microsoft Teams integration. TBWA relies on Teams as its collaboration platform. In the past, sharing large files through Teams was difficult and expensive. Now, with Nasuni Access Anywhere, Teams remains the front-end interface for users, but all the sharing happens through Nasuni in the background, so files aren't moving from one cloud or platform to another. "The Teams integration is brilliant," says Litton. "We use it a lot. Being able to have Teams as the interface for internal collaboration, if we're sharing slide decks, for example, saves us a fortune."

Sensitive client data secured

Some of the world's most iconic brands entrust TBWA with critical product information and details months before a public product release. TBWA needs to prove to it itself and its clients that files are safe and secure. Strong Nasuni encryption, combined with the privacy and security of object storage and Active Directory integration, meets the agency's strict standards.

Data redundancy eliminated

Previously, TBWA had multiple versions of the same files stored across the world. Now each virtual Nasuni appliance deduplicates and compresses data before storing it in object storage, eliminating this redundancy and the associated, unnecessary costs.

Improved data protection

Nasuni Continuous File Versioning® maintains an unlimited, easily accessible version history of every file. This eliminates the need for separate backup and disaster recovery. Plus, with Nasuni, TBWA can restore access to files within minutes of a disaster — including a ransomware attack.

Multi-cloud portability

The Nasuni File Data Platform also supports TBWA's cloud-agnostic strategy, allowing the agency to migrate file data from one object storage platform to another, such as Amazon, Azure, or Google Cloud, as its needs evolve.

Simpler management

TBWA's consolidated IT teams can now manage the entire global file storage estate through the Nasuni Management Console. That means these highly qualified professionals spend less time managing shares, volumes, backup schedules, file restores, and WAN issues, and more time on the strategic IT projects that drive the business.

An agency ahead of its time

TBWA has long held a reputation as a groundbreaking, innovative creative agency, and that fearless attraction to new ideas extends to its IT strategy. TBWA was among the first global firms to move away from legacy infrastructure to the cloud and the firm has continued innovating by deploying Nasuni Access Anywhere to support its remote and hybrid workforce. With a modern file data services platform like Nasuni, TBWA has the scalable file storage, data protection, anywhere access, and global collaboration capabilities it needs to maximize its creative talent.